An original sconce was replaced during rehabilitation.
Photo © Richard Maack

Kolb Studio

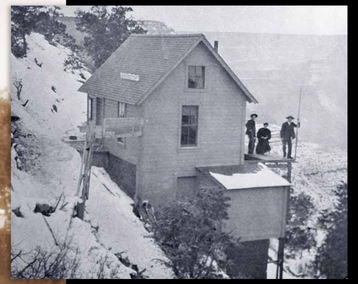
Kolb Studio as it looked in 1925.
NAU.PH.568.4709

WHEN THE Kolb brothers dismantled their photography studio in Williams in 1903, they gave the lumber to future U.S. Senator Ralph Cameron in exchange for space near his rim-side hotel where they conducted business from a tent. One of Cameron's prospecting holes near the rim served as their first darkroom.

In 1904 the brothers built a wood-framed studio at the head of Bright Angel Trail to house their lab and darkroom. Denied permits by the U.S. Forest Service, they built on a mining claim controlled by Ralph Cameron.

A major addition to the studio, completed in 1915, allowed Emery to conduct lectures enlivened with lantern slides and moving picture film of their trip down the Green and Colorado Rivers. Additions and modifications occurred over the years, adding more space to the studio's living quarters and auditorium.

After ensuring that the building was officially listed as a historic property, Emery sold the studio to the National Park Service in 1962. He was permitted to live in his home for the remainder of his life. When Emery died in 1976, the park service acquired the five-story, 23-room structure and the Grand Canyon Association later funded its renovation.



Ellsworth, Emery and Blanche Kolb pose on their deck in 1905.
NAU.PH.568.1197

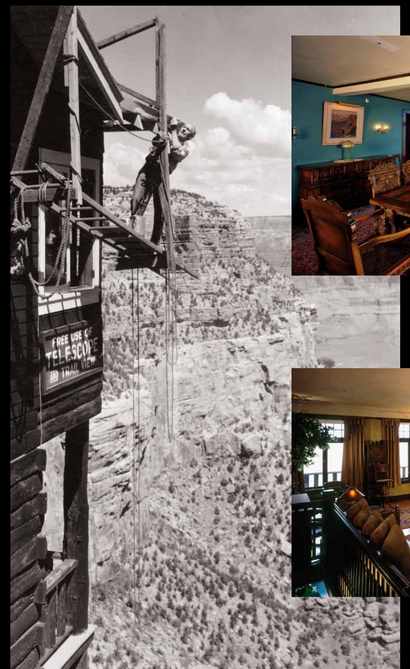
Expansion was underway in 1914. NAU.PH. 568.4708

In 1915 the Kolbs added an auditorium in which to show their motion picture. NAU.PH.568.4648

The Kolb family's residence was refurnished in 1998. The downstairs parlor reflects Blanche's taste for luxurious Oriental rugs and carved furniture. Photo © Richard Maack

By 1916 the building had grown substantially and was easily seen from the inner canyon.
NAU.PH.568.9392

Built on a vertical site, deliveries could be difficult. But the Kolbs didn't let that get in the way of ordering a piano. NAU.PH.568.4737

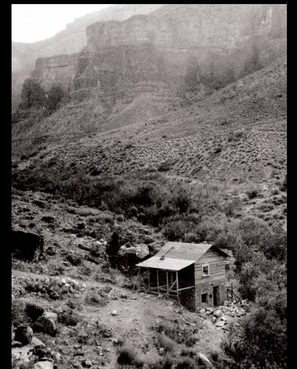


Emery continued to maintain the building even in his later years. Apparently, he was not afraid of heights. NAU.PH.568.4726

Blanche ordered dining room furniture from a catalog in 1927, following the last major expansion of the building.
Photo © Richard Maack

Mule wranglers stopped on the trail and rang a bell to let Emery know they were ready to be photographed. Emery used a pre-positioned view camera to shoot through his work room window. Photo © Richard Maack

Blanche often hosted guests for Bridge games and teas in the parlor on the auditorium level. Photo © Richard Maack



Clean water for processing photographs was rare on the rim. In 1906 the brothers built a darkroom near Indian Garden, four and a half miles from the rim by trail, to take advantage of fresh water in Garden Creek. They photographed mule riders outside the studio as they left the rim, then ran down to their darkroom to process the photos and back up again to have souvenir prints ready for sale by the time riders returned. NAU.PH.568.1229

FAR LEFT: Building materials were delivered by burros. NAU.PH.568.7237